

News Release

Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Date: March 6, 2009

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Removes Trees to Control Infestation of Southern Pine Beetle

Refuge Manager Lou Hinds today announced plans for controlling a recent outbreak of the southern pine beetle (*Dendroctonus frontalis* Zimmermann), which is impacting the maritime forests found on Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. In response to the threat, direct control tactics other than insecticides will be used.

In early October 2008, refuge staff first discovered warning signs of southern pine beetle activity found along both sides of the trails leading to the Assateague Lighthouse. That same month, a representative from the Virginia Department of Forestry conducted an on-site visit, verified their presence, and recommended monitoring before any direct action was taken. The perimeter of the infestation was marked with yellow flagging and weekly checks, conducted by staff and volunteers continued through December.

The residual impact of the pine beetles combined with the effects of high winds during winter storms made it clear that action would be necessary. Recently, the refuge hired a contractor, operating under a special use permit, to implement direct control tactics. "You may be temporarily inconvenienced by closure of the Lighthouse Trail, while corrective action is being taken," said Hinds. To prevent the slow spread of invading pine beetles, the contractor will cut and remove infested trees along with an appropriate buffer of un-infested trees.

"These measures will affect about 1 acre of forest habitat where a high volume of tree mortality has occurred along or near public access trails. Upon completion, approximately 100 pine trees will be removed to minimize risk to public safety," Hinds further explained.

Forest restoration is just one of many activities conducted on Chincoteague Refuge to maintain favorable habitat for the endangered Delmarva Peninsula fox squirrel, neotropical migrants, and resident wildlife species.

Go to http://www.na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/fidls/so_pine_beetle/so_pine.htm for additional information about the southern pine beetle.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov

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